

DETAILED ACTION

Receipt is acknowledged of a reply to the previous Office Action, filed March 23, 2009. Claims 1-31 are canceled. Claims 32-43 are new.

Claims 32-43 are pending and under consideration in the instant application. Any rejection of record in the previous Office Action, mailed December 22, 2008 that is not addressed in this action has been withdrawn.

Because this Office Action only maintains rejections set forth in the previous Office Action and/or sets forth new rejections that are necessitated by amendment, this Office Action is made FINAL.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

Claims 39 and 40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, because the specification, while being enabling for producing lactic acid, does not reasonably provide enablement for production of all other organic acids. The specification does not enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to use the invention commensurate in scope with these claims.

Enablement is considered in view of the Wands factors (MPEP

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2164.01(A)). These include: nature of the invention, breadth of the claims, guidance of the specification, the existence of working examples, state of the art, predictability of the art and the amount of experimentation necessary. All of the Wands factors have been considered with regard to the instant claims, with the most relevant factors discussed below.

Nature of the invention: The nature of the invention is a method of producing an organic acid in a medium containing lactic acid.

Breadth of the claims: The method is broad because organic acid can be produced, according to the claims.

Guidance of the specification: The only organic acid produced is lactic acid, as exemplified by the specification. The specification does not teach any other organic acid produced by this method.

Amount of experimentation necessary: The amount of experimentation would be undue because Applicants only disclose production of lactic acid in their specification. Furthermore, it is unclear how a method using a DNA construct with a gene encoding a lactate dehydrogenase would produce any organic acid other than lactic acid.

In view of the breadth of the claims and the lack of guidance provided by the specification as well as the unpredictability of the art, the skilled artisan would have required an undue amount of experimentation to use any organic acid other than lactic acid.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 41 and 42 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 32-38 and 43 are allowed.

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to MICHELE K. JOIKE whose telephone number is (571)272-5915. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 10:00-6:30.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Christopher Low can be reached on (571)272-0951. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Michele K. Joike
Examiner
Art Unit 1636

/ Christopher S. F. Low /
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 1636